



Workers at P.B. Martin Creamery about 1910



1908 Banneker School graduating class with Elder Watson Diggs, Principal and founder of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity

Front Photo: Man standing on the Center of Population Stone placed in front of the Showers Brothers Furniture Factory Plant #1 in 1910

# A Walk Through the West Side Historic District

Historic Tour Guide No.1



City of Bloomington, Indiana



## In Appreciation:

Research for this project was originally funded in part by a Department of the Interior grant administered by the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Financial support for this publication was provided by the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Development, City of Bloomington.

Assistance was provided by Danielle Bachant-Bell and Nancy Hiestand.

Many thanks for the historic photographs of Elizabeth E. Bridgwaters' collection and William H. Mathers Museum.

The buildings shown here are representative and are not intended to be an exhaustive list of historic resources in the district.

This brochure has been funded in part by a U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grant and administered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology. This program has received federal assistance for the identification, protection, and/or rehabilitation of historic properties and cultural resources in the State of Indiana. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability in its federally assisted programs.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The activity that is the subject of the brochure has been financed in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Parks Service. However, the contents and opinions contained in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

## West Side

When Bloomington was laid out in 1818, the area now known as the West Side Historic District was undeveloped outlots—land reserved for small farming operations by town residents and for future urban expansion. In 1853, tracks for the Louisville, New Albany and Salem Railroad were laid along what is now Morton Street. Industrial growth centered around the railroad began with early businesses including Seward and Sons Foundry, Thomas Hardesty carding mill, McChum's grist mill, and Major Hite's steam flour mill. During this period residential development was minimal, consisting mainly of large tracts of land owned by prominent citizens. Federal, Greek Revival and Italianate styled I-houses were a predominant house type with excellent examples still present.

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed the west side experienced increased growth. After a devastating fire in 1884, the Showers Brothers Company relocated from the east side of town to a site on the west side along the railroad tracks. The significant history of the West Side also reflects the migration of African Americans to the Westside of Bloomington where they were encouraged to purchase homes and to be close to the Showers factory, one of the few companies that employed blacks. Other industries of that growth era were: Dolan Tierman Stave Factory, Field Glove, Bloomington Basket Company, Nurre Mirror Company, Central Oolitic Stone Saw Mill, and Hoadley Stone Company. The area continued to be integrated, however it became familiar as the home of Bloomington's African American community and the location of its most important landmarks. Second Baptist Church, Bethel A.M.E. Church and the Banneker School are outstanding in both the quality of their design and materials. A few wealthy citizens and middle class businessmen built imposing homes along Kirkwood east of Maple, but this was not the residential trend. Instead, smaller lots were platted for denser neighborhoods on which simply designed vernacular houses were built for the West Side's rapidly expanding workforce. Pyramidal roof, shot-gun, and gabled-ell house forms with Queen Anne or Free Classic detailing—often available through catalogs and pattern books—were common throughout the neighborhood during the turn of the century and many examples are still visible. The established nature of this community is also reflected in the landmark limestone buildings that remain.

Other buildings in the West Side reflect the city's change from horse drawn to automobile transportation in the decade of the 1920's. Car dealerships, garages, and motor specialty businesses were built close to downtown and reflect the industrial architecture of the period: brick construction with steel windows, stepped parapets and vaulted roofs. Residences of the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also reflect the predominant types of the period, the bungalow and foursquare with Craftsman detailing.

The period from 1900-1918 is known as the "Bloomington Renaissance." These years of growth and prosperity established the physical character of the city as it is seen today. Businesses of the West Side figured prominently in this era. Annually approximately \$2 million in products and \$3 million in limestone were exported, and \$1 million came into the city through Indiana University. The heart of the West Side district was undoubtedly the Showers Brother's Furniture Factory, the largest single furniture factory in the United States by 1912. Showers Brothers Company was also known for its unique scope of influence in furniture design and innovation, in its progressive stance on minority employment, and in the overall growth of the City of Bloomington.

During the 1990s, the West Side began experiencing a new type of growth. The restoration and re-use of large industrial buildings began with conversion of Showers Brother's Plant #1 into elegant office space and City Hall. The residential area also experienced revitalization by various public and private entities. Funding for these projects came from a variety of sources including federal tax credits, local tax abatement, CDBG funds, private investment, and other local programs benefiting owners of historic homes. The result has been an increase in homeownership and revitalization of the neighborhood's sense of community.

Today the Near West Side of Bloomington remains a racially diverse, family oriented neighborhood with minimal alterations to its historic homes and commercial buildings. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the largest area so designated in the city. Fairview Historic District, the boundaries of which are within the West Side Historic District, is a Bloomington local Historic District. Buildings that are individually listed are noted by NR (National Register) and LD (Locally Designated) in the site list. More information on the West Side, and copies of the National Register nominations, are available in the Indiana Room of the Monroe County Public Library.

\* The walking tour is at least 2 hours on slightly hilly terrain.

## West Side walking tour





**1. Showers Brothers Co.  
Furniture Showroom  
531 North Morton  
c. 1920**

One of four remaining buildings from the Showers Brothers Company complex, the L-shaped former showroom and research laboratory is constructed of variegated red brick. It displays a pilastered façade with simple limestone detailing, a raised rusticated basement, and a stepped parapet roof typical of commercial buildings of the period. The building immediately to the north (601 N. Morton, c. 1915) housed the company's administrative offices. Although similar in appearance, it displays more ornate and classical limestone pilasters and parapet details.



**2. Showers Brothers Co.  
Furniture Factory  
401 North Morton  
1910/1923**

With nearly 200,000 square feet, this is the largest remaining historic industrial building in the city. At the height of the company's operation the complex consisted of two large factory buildings with over a dozen smaller supporting structures. Known as Plant No. 1, the factory was constructed in a polygonal plan to conform to the railroad tracks running on both its east and west sides. The red brick building displays a distinctive sawtooth roof with north-facing skylights and repetitive bays. A major rehabilitation project in 1994-1996 allowed its adaptive re-use as City Hall. Across the street at 416-420 N. Morton (c. 1927), is the Smallwood-Pike building. It housed the Smallwood Restaurant (1927-28), Record Hatchery (1929-35), and Charles Pike Lumber Company (1930-56).



**3. Illinois Central Railroad  
Freight Depot  
301 North Morton  
1906; NR & LD**

To spur development in the area, local government provided an \$85,000 subsidy for rail line construction along what is now Morton Street. The depot was built in the most architecturally functional way to serve the burgeoning limestone, furniture and lumber companies nearby. A second floor on the south side was added in 1922, but in 1959, fifty-four feet of freight space was demolished from the north side. In 1963 the building was removed from rail service. At 214 W. 7<sup>th</sup> is the 1922 Curry Buick Building, used as a Buick dealership until 1971. The building at 300 W. 7<sup>th</sup> (1915) originally housed Bloomington Wholesale Foods.



**4. Johnson's Creamery  
400 West 7th  
c. 1913/1925; NR**

Ward and Ellis Johnson bought out the Bloomington Creamery in 1913. Shortly thereafter the oldest part of this brick factory building was built at the east end. By 1925 the space had quadrupled. The three-story, windowless, cork-lined icehouse was built during the rapid expansion of the 1920s. The newest part of the building dates from the 1950's. Its adaptive re-use retained the 120 foot smokestack and two large compressors.



**5. Bethel A.M.E. Church  
302 North Rogers  
1921**

Bloomington's first architect, John Nichols, designed this Arts and Crafts style limestone building for the second location of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal congregation, founded in 1870. Member Mattie Jacobs Fuller raised over \$13,000 dollars toward the building fund by playing gospel hymns and spirituals on her portable organ every Saturday afternoon on the square. Pointed arch window openings, stained glass and multi-paned windows, and an ashlar limestone and pilastered façade distinguish this unique religious structure.



**6. 221 North Rogers  
c. 1860**

This is one of the few mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century frame houses remaining in Bloomington. It has served as a Civil War hospital, a nursing home, boarding house and possibly a roadhouse. An unusually long I-house with rear wing, gable-end chimney and stone foundation, it retains much of its original appearance despite the addition of aluminum siding.



**7. John East House  
417 West 6th  
1863**

Also known as Brakefield, this house was built as a parsonage for First Methodist Church. It was later owned by John R. East, lawyer, Civil War veteran and author of *Captain Wallop* and *The Great Monon Express Robbery*. This brick two-thirds I-house shows the beginning of the transitional building period on the west side. It features elaborate bracketing on the front porch and handsome glass-work around the front door.



**8. Bloomington Garage  
316 West 6th  
c. 1925**

This building was first used for car repair and service and later as a Chrysler Plymouth dealership. Its brick masonry, stepped parapet and open bowstring truss are typical period elements of auto-related architecture. To the east, at 300 W. 6<sup>th</sup>, was the site of Hays Market, a local grocery serving the west side from the 1940s until the late 1990s.



**9. Batman House  
403 West Kirkwood  
1895**

Designed by Bloomington architect John Nichols, this mansion was built by John Waldron for his daughter at the corner of his tannery site. She married Judge Ira Batman, a prominent attorney, judge and First National Bank official. The house is the sole residential example of grand proportion use of limestone in the district. Its rich variety of textures and forms display elements of the Second Empire, Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival styles.



**10. Frosted Food Building  
213 South Rogers  
c. 1927**

Originally built to house a sheet metal and auto repair shop, the building is characteristic of early twentieth century industrial construction. The steel sash ventilator windows and metal bowstring truss roof provide interesting space for adaptive reuse as a retail center. The similar brick building to the north, the Fell Building (c. 1930), was also built for the auto industry and displays similar architectural features. The brick building across Rogers Street was the location of Roy Burns Market (1934), one of several small grocery stores that once dotted the district. To the northwest, at 505-511 W. 4<sup>th</sup>, is the 1934 City Garage.



**11. Graves-Morrison House  
608 West Kirkwood  
c. 1885**

Built for the Graves Family, this two-story gabled-ell has a rich variety of Queen Anne detailing. The two-story projecting bay has its own bracketed gable. Decorative scrollwork adorns the wrap-around porch and a small second story porch has its own gable. The Morrison family, only the second owners of the house, restored it in 1990. The building to the east, at 514 W. Kirkwood, was originally an unadorned I-house. It was transformed c.1895 into the Queen Anne style with a round corner tower, two-story veranda with delicate paired columns and spindle work, and decorative shingling in the gables.



**12. Hendrix House  
726 West 6th  
c. 1875**

Built for Hannah Hendrix before the surrounding area was platted, this farmhouse is an example of an I-house with rear additions. Notice the two-story front porch, the flush chimneys and the cornice entablature. Originally a single-family dwelling, it has been an apartment house since the early 1900's.



**13. Fairview Methodist Church  
606 West 6th  
c. 1922**

Founded in 1895, the congregation relocated to this site when fire destroyed its 1914 building. Built in the Gothic Revival style, this brick building is enhanced with limestone trim and opalescent glass windows. To the west at 615 W. 6<sup>th</sup>, the Queen Anne-styling of this late 19<sup>th</sup> century brick house is indicated by the decorative shingling in the multiple gables and the irregular floor plan. Note the etched glass window and the round-arched brick lintels. Next door at 621 W. 6<sup>th</sup>, this c. 1890 brick Queen Anne cottage features a hipped roof with gables, tall chimneys, arched brick lintels, and plain returns. North of the church on the corner of Jackson and 7th (523 W. 7<sup>th</sup>), is a c. 1880 central passage home with a cross gabled porch, decorative shingle work, and bay windows.



**14. Griffin House  
621 West 7th  
c. 1898**

Built by Lafayette Mayfield, the Griffin family occupied it for 44 years. The family owned Quality Hardware Store and Mrs. Griffin was a founding member of the Fairview PTA. Its typical Queen Anne detailing features multiple gables, turned porch posts and a decorative spindle frieze. Immediately to the west, at 625 W. 7<sup>th</sup>, is a c. 1925 side gable bungalow with a rock-faced limestone porch. This house type is representative of the later construction era of the neighborhood.



**15. Flanigan House  
714 West 7th  
c. 1895**

One of this home's earliest occupants was J.W. Faris whose family still maintains a grocery store near the courthouse square. It was later owned by the Rev. Adamson, minister of the Church of Christ, and in the 1930s was occupied by the Ringlette Shop, one of the many beauty parlors in the neighborhood. This two-story gabled-ell has decorative gable shingles, corner brackets and turned porch posts with a decorative spindle frieze. The Sweeney House (1932) passed at 702 W. 7<sup>th</sup> is one of the few American Foursquare homes in the neighborhood, another type representative of the later era. Relatively affordable and often built as a kit home, it doubled the square footage of the bungalow.



**16. 904 West 7th  
c. 1900**

This single story, frame shotgun is one room wide with a gabled wing. Its history reportedly includes use as a neighborhood restaurant. Additional examples of the shotgun house can be viewed along N. Adams Street. The gabled-ell cottage at 902 W. 7<sup>th</sup> features a hipped roof and multiple gables of the Queen Anne period.



**17. The Bancker School  
930 West 7th  
1915**

Surrounded by a Works Progress Administration (WPA) limestone wall, the Bancker was substantially built of dressed limestone that modestly recalls the Beaux Arts style. From 1915 until 1954, the Bancker served as a segregated grade school. The City of Bloomington now uses it as a community center. Further west on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, visited either on foot or by vehicle, is the White Oak Cemetery. Originally named United Presbyterian Cemetery for the church once located on the site, burials date prior to 1876 and include locally prominent names such as Fee, Wylie, Bryan, Gourley, Woodburn and Henderson.



**18. 722 West 8th  
c. 1930**

The WPA constructed several limestone retaining walls in the neighborhood. This example is the rock-faced block while others display "found" slabs and rubble face block. Hexagonal tile walks in the neighborhood are also WPA projects. The homes to the west are additional examples of typical late-19<sup>th</sup> century house types, the gabled-ell (across the street at 715 W. 8<sup>th</sup>) and the pyramidal roof cottage (to the west at 802 W. 8<sup>th</sup>).



**19. Elias Abel House  
317 North Fairview  
c. 1850; NR & LD**

Elias Abel, county treasurer and state legislator, bought the lot in 1845 and built this house sometime before selling the property in 1856. Built in the Greek Revival style, originally with a "fair view of the courthouse", it may well be the finest frame example of the central hall I-house in Bloomington. The low-pitched roof is supported by a decorative frieze with boxed returns on the gable ends; Doric pilasters are on both front corners and the open porch (a restoration) echoes the Greek columns and decorated frieze found on the eaves and gables. Further east at 627 W. 8<sup>th</sup> is Fairview Public School. The present main building (1953) replaced the original 1892 Romanesque Revival structure. The WPA brick annex was built in 1928.



**20. Cochran-Helton-Lindley House  
504 North Rogers  
1850; NR & LD**

Built in 1850 by James Cochran, a prosperous miller, liquor merchant, cabinetmaker and landowner, this imposing brick I-house was restored in the 1970's. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the house was owned by prominent Bloomington citizens including Andrew Helton, Samuel Buskirk and Hiram Lindley. Architectural features include Italianate paired curve brackets, a front portico with paired limestone columns and a paneled front door with transom and sidelights.



**21. Second Baptist Church  
321 North Rogers  
1913; NR & LD**

The Second Baptist congregation was established in Bloomington in 1872. Samuel Plato, a black architect from Louisville, designed this church according to the Akron plan: a square sanctuary with semi-circular seating. Plato was later employed by the federal government and designed many post offices and federal buildings. Here the limestone veneer façade has large gables, a square bell tower and stained glass windows. The cornerstone inscription reads: "Second Baptist Church/ 1913/ Rev. M.M. Porter, Pastor."



*Please respect the privacy of the owners by  
viewing all private buildings from the street.*